

# Down and Out with Crusaders

A Comedy in Five Episodes

The Art Hog Edition

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Everyone will be sterilized.

*to Joy*



## CHARACTERS

- AHMAD                    A man in his late thirties. He looks like Abu Musab al Zarqawi, leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. AHMAD wears a white doctor's jacket with a black t-shirt underneath, and black jeans. He sports a black skullcap pulled as far as it goes.
- BOZEMAN                A man in his mid-forties. He looks like Robert Mapplethorpe. His attire is the same as AHMAD's, save for a large red cross that adorns the back of his jacket. And BOZEMAN is bare-headed. His hair is in a pompadour about to collapse.
- WESSON                 A woman in her early thirties. WESSON wears a white hospital gown with a red cross on the back. She is a poet.

## SETTING

A public toilet in the Boston area.

. . . .



## **The Brothers**

*Upstage, opposite the audience, there are three toilet stalls. The one on the right—as seen by an actor facing the public—has had its door removed. This stall is vacant. The others are occupied.*

*BOZEMAN is standing on the beam that connects the toilet stalls. He is facing stage left and walking backward. Holding on to an imaginary steering wheel, he imitates a reversing truck.*

BOZEMAN

Beep-beep-beep—stuck! Beep-beep-beep—stuck! Ho-ho-ho—holy fuck! Pedal to the metal! Flooring it, I am, but the wheels won't take. They are spinning in place, my brother, backwards. Like my thoughts. Like, like WHERE ARE YOU?

*[He sits down on the beam and inspects the sole of his shoe.]*

I must have hit something. Nope.

*[He inspects the other shoe.]*

It's negative for dog shit. It's negative for bubble gum. Well, what the fuck?

*[He rises and moves to the right end of the beam. He starts moving backward as before.]*

Well, I am not. I'm dead meat! I'm stuck!

*[The intro to Norah Jones's "Stuck" is heard. BOZEMAN listens to it. Then the music fades.]*

Hey hey hey hey! Why don't we just, why don't we stop?

*[He stops, turns to stage right.]*

Who goes there?

*[Raising his hands]*

Don't shoot! I have citizenship!

*[He grabs the wheel again, determined now.]*

We can't stop. I'm sorry, I forgot. That was the cops. They told me. They tell me to give it up, turn myself in. They say it's over. They haven't heard of Lenny Kravitz, I guess. It ain't over 'til it's over! But they distracted me for a sec there. They are shooting at me, at us. My brother, he's under the car. Tammy, what are you doing there? Get out! Get in! I'm running you over as we speak!

*[He jumps to the floor. He runs to the left and grabs the wheel again. He stops, as if remembering something. He stretches the waist of his jeans, addressing his ass crack.]*

For fuck's sake, you retard, get real! Get in, GET IN!

*[He lets go of his trousers and turns to the wheel again. He proceeds backward. He mimes throwing something over his shoulder every 10 seconds or so. It's a pipe bomb, as we shall see.]*

I can't hear you. Guns are blazing, these bombs going off, you're hurting—something has got to give. It's a hell of a job, driving and throwing, not to mention trying to avoid crushing your brother under this very nice automobile. But I tell you this, I tell you this: I'm sorry. Yelling at you, insulting you, it was my bad. Sorry, bro. It was uncalled for, calling you a retard. After all, you're not one. You're not a retard, are you? And yet, this isn't the time or the place to check the oil. They are trying to kill us as we speak. Talk later, all right? Motherfucker, get real and get in.

*[Having stopped, he turns to the AUDIENCE.]*

How silly of me, to act like that. But I had quite a handful back then. The situation was quite stressful, to be frank with you. I didn't understand, but I do now. I'm not in charge. You are. You always are. You were looking after me even there, under the car. You were arranging a get-away for both of us.

*[Hand to his throat]*

When they caught me—first shot me, then caught me—in that landed boat in Watertown, I developed a halo over my head. I'm not kidding. The SWAT teams had their rifles trained on me as I climbed out of the boat. Come out with your hands raised, the megaphone blared. And how am I supposed to climb down like that, I asked. That's when I noticed the lasers. The red dots weaved a band on my curls, a crown of thorns for the digital age.

[*Hand to his forehead*]

I've seen the pictures, they're beautiful. So I declared myself the patron saint of all reformed Communists—active ones, too. Then I blacked out. Did I fall overboard? Cant' remember. I guess they gave me something, I don't know. Or perhaps it was just the stress and exhaustion.

[*He spreads his hands.*]

Anyway, for a second there, everything was all right. All was well, as if nothing had happened. Paradise. It lasted until moments before I woke up. That's when I started sensing something, I started to recall. And I opened my eyes. I cried like a baby. I didn't cry for the Boylston Street casualties, or the cop—death becomes a pig—not even the kid. Eight years old, he was. No, I cried for you. For no matter what they say, you are a victim too. You fell victim to the military industrial complex. Down with crusaders! And out—to hell with them! That's what I said as I cried my eyes out. I cried out all my longing for you. My big brother, my protector—Where were you? I was all alone. They didn't tell me. They didn't tell me anything. But I knew, I knew.

[*He covers his eyes.*]

You were named after a warrior king.

[*After the blue interlude, once again, he is full of energy. Smiling, he reveals his eyes.*]

A man of meager beginnings, a shepherd, he didn't give an inch until he ruled the world as they knew it. He was known as the Scourge of God. That's the way it is in the play at least. The author must have confused him with someone. Anyway, his given name, Tamerlan, evoked terror in his enemies, the *kuffar* everywhere.

[*Behind him, a slide appears, translating,  
“Kafir = infidel, non-believer.”*]

They shuddered at the mere mention of his name. They ran for cover. Now that name is yours, my brother. Tell me, Tamerlan.

[*Lights change to a lonely spot in utter darkness.*]

Is Paradise the state I was in at the hospital? Before I woke up, is that it? If so, then what’s the use? In waking up, doing a thing? I just can’t see the point, is why I’m asking.

[*He kneels.*]

Is it any better, the one you found yourself in? The Paradise I sent you to—is it better?

[*“The Kiss,” a song by Judee Sill is heard—faintly at first, building up in volume. BOZEMAN gets up.*]

It is? Good for you! Since, you know, in the end, you didn’t protect me. You promised, yeah, I know. But it was all bullshit, as usual. You were a talker, Tamerlan, you had a huge mouth. Some say you were an FBI informant—I’m not buying it. You couldn’t be. You never accomplished a thing. You were a loser, my brother was a failure. And it was I who created him. I am the author of you. I made you a martyr, I made you *shahid*, no one else. It was me. So fuck you. Who left me holding nothing but a dick in my hand, the gearshift, and a SWAT team on my back? So I put it in reverse and I floored it. Goodbye, bitch!

[*He breaks character. The music fades.*]

I prepared that speech for an audition. They held it for that Mark Wahlberg movie. The one about the Boston

Marathon bombings, you know? I would've loved to be able to play Jahar the White Hat, the younger perpetrator. The younger brother, he's such a pup! Have you seen him on the cover of *Rolling Stone*? Wow! Jahar was the pet of the whole, the entire extended family. They were immigrants. I know what you're thinking—and no, they didn't cross from Mexico. The Tsarnaevs, they hailed from Chechnya, Dagestan, Russia. They lived all over the place. They still do. They went back, after the episode. So, in order to send all those Salvadoran gangbangers back, all you need is a terrorist plot. And they will go. It's like flushing the toilet, easy.

[*A toilet is flushed. BOZEMAN tries to suppress a smile.*]

I always wanted to be an actor, a movie star. Before anything else—before art, photography—it was James Dean and Marlon Brando all the time. I wanted to follow their stars. But the movie business is corrupt. It is rotten to the core. It's this country compressed into a single diamond covered in blood. The casting director, guess what she said? The Boston Strangler, I call her. She goes, "You don't look the part! You don't look anything like him!" Honest to God, what she says. Boston Strangler just blurts it out like that. Bitch! If that's not racism, I don't know what is. Where's your imagination? Where's your creativity? Keep your movie! That's what I said, and I walked out. Then and there, I disappeared. The streets of Boston swallowed me. I became a ghost then and there. I haven't seen the flick, can't remember its name—it is dead to me. But it's a pity for the text. That's a good piece, I think. And it was written by someone who knew his subject through and through. He was named after a Mar-

lowe character: “Kit” Marlowe that is, Christopher, not Philip. Fuck Philip. He stopped writing, said there were no real results to show for all the hours that he’d put in. He’d rather just box. But he was mediocre at that, too, at the very best. His ego was too fragile. So that was that, it was suicide mission calling. There isn’t a great difference to him, living or dead. He’s still fighting the shadows. His brother is up for the needle in maximum security, soon to be deceased, also. There isn’t that much to tell, to be honest. So, instead of the Brothers, what you get now is the Burning Bus. Say bye-bye to Masha Gessen. She wrote the speech. It was ghost-written by her, anyway. All right, on three: one, two, three.

[*Blackout.*]

### **The Burning Bus**

[*Bright lights come up suddenly. Only seconds have passed since the end of the scene before. BOZEMAN is standing where he stood.*]

BOZEMAN

There is a place where losers gather to dream about winning.

[*Taunting the audience*]

And how does it feel? To be imprisoned here? How does it feel to be buried in maximum security?

[*He gets a mop and a bucket.*]

Supermax, they call it. Spotless, shiny and clean—a fucking hospital, it seems to me. “Let’s keep it that way!” First I thought they named it Florence, you know, just for kicks.

*[An aerial photo of the ADX prison Florence is projected behind BOZEMAN. He is mopping the floor.]*

Can you add to the perversity somehow? Glad that you asked! “Yes, we can.” Let’s call it Florence! Then reality burst in and spoiled everything. The town is called Florence, the local of the prison, not the looney-bin itself. I can imagine the confusion already.

*[Dropping the mop, he sits in his imaginary car again, heading forward this time.]*

“What is this place? Florence, Italy? No? Florence, Colorado? And I was snapping away like crazy, like Robert Mapplethorpe! Shit! Erase memory! Drive thru! Pedal to the metal! Flooring it”

*[He stops.]*

Why don’t we call it, this state-of-the art butchery, Rose? While we’re at it—after the theater, you know? Lord Admiral’s men performed there.

*[Taunting the AUDIENCE]*

Yes, it has something to do with Shakespeare! It’s the intermission, morons, time to wake up! No, I’m kidding. Go back to sleep. Rose, the old flower: Shakespeare’s shit was first performed there. Old Will, he held a mirror to humanity. That’s what they say. And who looked behind the mirror? What was happening behind Will’s back? Wouldn’t you just love to know? Wouldn’t you just love to see?

*[Raising his index finger]*

The place where losers gather to dream about winning—

*[His hand transforms into a fist. He shakes it and throws invisible dice.]*

It's here. This is it, the place you created, the people's court. You're transforming prison into a sanctuary for losers. Is that what you wanted? Well, all right, then. I'm glad you could make it. This is it. My beautiful friends, it's the end.

*[Beat]*

But then again, the place affects those who occupy it. Some become losers by just sitting there.

*[The ADX image is replaced by mug shots of Theodore Kaczynski, Richard Reid and Timothy McVeigh.]*

And you've got company! Here they come, the gladiators, culprits—the most frightening individuals of our time come a-crawling in!

*[The door to the toilet stall on the right is flung open, as AHMAD enters. He is cleaning his fingernails with a Swiss army knife. He listens to BOZEMAN with some amusement.]*

Look! They are all here: the Unabomber, the Boston bomber—well, not him. He's missing. Fuck him. Instead, we've got the the shoe bomber, the inbred bomber—

*[Pointing at someone in the AUDIENCE]*

We have a question! It's about time! Power to the people! You should always, always, you know, participate. Leave? You cannot. Next! Yes, go ahead. "Aren't they one and the same, the last two?" You mean the shoe bomber and the inbred bomber? No, they're not. The shoe salesman tried to blow up an airplane. He failed, miserably. The *Deliver-*

ance boy didn't. The government building in Oklahoma, the Salieri building, as we know it here at the supermax—

AHMAD

[*Smiling*]

Timothy McVeigh.

BOZEMAN

It collapsed like a house of cards.

AHMAD

Our Timmy! Now there's a man to my liking.

BOZEMAN

I thought Tammy was.

AHMAD

Huh?

BOZEMAN

Tammy, Tammy. Not Wynette—the boy they named Sue. Not Sue, Tammy. Tamerlan.

AHMAD

I don't follow.

BOZEMAN

No wonder.

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

What's behind the mirror, you ask.

[*Pointing at AHMAD*]

He's behind the mirror.

AHMAD

I am?

BOZEMAN

You are.

AHMAD

I'm not behind.

*[Slightly alarmed]*

Behind in what?

BOZEMAN

The mirror! That Shakespeare held to humanity!

*[The cover of Rolling Stone issue 1188—with an image of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev—is projected behind the actors.]*

Behind it, there be monsters, there be horror, and that's about it. That is all. And justice for all, it's prison for everyone, as we say at the supermax.

AHMAD

*[His chill self again]*

The land of the infidel does it every time.

*[The image of Sean Penn shaking hands with Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán is projected behind the actors.]*

BOZEMAN

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

You're on death row, each and every one of you. You can appeal your sentence. You can postpone your execution, and that is all.

AHMAD

It never fails in letting you down.

BOZEMAN

You can buy time. But you've already lost. Why? You were trying to take on the system all by yourself, that's why!

AHMAD

Crusaders, they never fail in failing you.

BOZEMAN

By yourself, you're doomed. Hey, knock yourself out, have fun, if that's what you're into. The S/M scene, I get it, I was into it once, myself. I get it. But together, you can turn the tide!

AHMAD

It's something you can trust. It's your rock of Gibraltar.

BOZEMAN

Turn the tables, together! You make an impact. Think of 1789! Think of the storming of Basquiat!

AHMAD

It's your crossing to al Andalus.

BOZEMAN

Basquiat? He was a street artist. I think it was Bastille I was talking about.

AHMAD

It's what brings about your Islamic Iberia or Muslim Spain again. It's the Caliphate, the State.

BOZEMAN

Bastille—yeah! Right on!

*[BOZEMAN starts singing the Marseillaise in a language of his own invention. He is marching in place.]*

AHMAD

*[Shouting]*

We're on our Road to Nowhere! Come on inside.

*[A fast, march-like drumming begins, the kind that accompanies "Road to Nowhere," the Talking Heads song. BOZEMAN ceases singing and marching. He raises his fist.]*

BOZEMAN

Together we start a revolution! Yeah, that's what I'm talking about—I am! All the losers of the world, unite!

AHMAD

*[To the AUDIENCE]*

Sorry to say this, but you asked for it.

BOZEMAN

You are a mob. Have you seen Danton? Have you watched him die? Well, that's who you are.

AHMAD

You stepped in it.

BOZEMAN

You are Robespierre. You are Colonel Kurtz. You are the Apocalypse, you bring it about.

AHMAD

And here we go again.

BOZEMAN

And don't you blink at me! You're a bunch of fucking Manchurian candidates, and you know it! You've been stuffed inside a plastic horse that is your phone! Yes, yours! I'm talking to you, about your goddamn phone—it's not smart, it's not indispensable, it's a godforsaken piece of shit! Did you leave it with your yellow vest at the door? Huh? No? DO IT NOW! Make America straight again! You're a bunch of useful idiots and nothing else! You need to stay back! Security! It's America first, America first, but I don't feel too American as it is. I feel exposed. I feel naked up here, all alone.... Well, I guess I'm not alone any more.

[To AHMAD]

Will you quench my thirst?

AHMAD

If you bow to me, I might.

BOZEMAN

*[Takes a bow]*

When they brought me in, there was a bus parked outside, right in front, in flames.

AHMAD

There was?

BOZEMAN

Saw it like I see you now, clear as the—hot as hell! Who blew it up, I don't know. Whoever it was, and why, I've no idea. Nevertheless, the act itself, the act is an indication that—

AHMAD

It wasn't.

BOZEMAN

The end.

AHMAD

Blown up.

BOZEMAN

I know.

AHMAD

Not.

BOZEMAN

Is near.

AHMAD

Blown up.

BOZEMAN

The end is nigh.

AHMAD

It was not.

BOZEMAN

Drawing near—I heard you.

[*Beat*]

How'd you know?

AHMAD

[*Inspired*]

It was burning, see? You said, yes? Did you hear an explosion? No. Was the body of the bus intact? The frame, it wasn't twisted this way and that? Yes, uh huh. They threw a Molotov in it, probably. Molotov cocktail—personally, I prefer IEDs. They are much more—

BOZEMAN

An improvised explosive device.

AHMAD

—effective.

BOZEMAN

An IED is.

AHMAD

Huh?

BOZEMAN

I have to translate, you know, to keep everybody up to speed.

AHMAD

You do?

BOZEMAN

One day, I will write a book, a dictionary. It has to be ghostwritten of course, under the circumstances. Is Masha Gessen available? She did a wonderful job with Tamerlan. Beautiful piece, that speech is. Anyway, *Jihadi—English—Jihadi*, it will be called. A map of misunderstandings. My dictionary.

AHMAD

Your dick?

BOZEMAN

My dictionary. It is the one thing in life, or death, that I still want to accomplish. After that, who knows? Maybe I can rest. Live a little. Die a little.

[Pause]

AHMAD

Well, back to IEDs.

BOZEMAN

Yes.

AHMAD

I preferred them anyway, past tense, that is. IED, an improvised embryo of death is what it is. Hey, take a pick!

BOZEMAN

Is it a game?

AHMAD

Yeah.

BOZEMAN

Okay.

AHMAD

You had a choice, which one would you take out—

BOZEMAN

You mean, blow up?

AHMAD

(Yeah.) An apartment building or a measly bus?

BOZEMAN

Good question, that is.

AHMAD

It is. It is.

BOZEMAN

Abu, you know what? You should be advertised!

AHMAD

I am. I am advertised, all over the internet. Like you wouldn't believe! It's insane, is what it is. But back to work, back to the matter at hand: think about it. Think! How ridiculous, how pathetic—

[*Snorts*]

A burning bus!

BOZEMAN

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Listen. Those not happy with the program, they are free to get up and go, walk outside and get in the bus. The ride is on us. The NATO will pick up the tab, as it should. Well, anyway, it should.

[*He turns to AHMAD*]

We offer you a safe passage, a corridor, dark as it may seem at the moment. It's always darkest just before the dawn, as they say.

[*He nearly sings a quote from a Nick Cave song, "There Is a Kingdom." He omits three words on purpose.*]

"Just like a bird that sings up the sun...so very dark, such is my faith for you." A new day is upon us. And it's the Golden Dawn! Get, go back to Fallujah—

AHMAD

[*Spits out*]

You go back to bed!

BOZEMAN

Or Donbas: You'll be back there in no time. No time at all! There's an all-inclusive alternate universe for people like you! Just jump off a bridge, the top of a tall building, and hey, presto—

[*To the* AUDIENCE]

Deep down inside, he's *titushky*, right? Donbas is for him what Sinaloa is for smack. The golden triangle of Sierra Madre Mountains—

AHMAD

What Khorasan is for smack, you mean.

BOZEMAN

The golden shower, he speaks. Hey ho, but I don't know. Nobody can figure out what the fuck it is that he's saying.

AHMAD

The word you didn't recognize, was it Khorasan? Am I right? You may know the holy land as Afghanistan.

BOZEMAN

Ahhh.

AHMAD

You can say that again.

BOZEMAN

Ahhh.

AHMAD

Those were the days!

BOZEMAN

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

May I introduce Abu? We use him to harass pedophiles.

AHMAD

You don't. You—

BOZEMAN

He's a good cautionary tale for the second-generation immigrants. First, too, come to think of it.

AHMAD

And who's "we"?

BOZEMAN

I beg your pardon?

AHMAD

I said, you said, "We do." Who's we?

BOZEMAN

[*Ignoring the question—to the AUDIENCE*]

You don't want to wind up like that, do you? Unh-unh, no way: so stay on the straight and narrow. Be nice. Be polite.

AHMAD

There's no one here but you—a lonely pedophile searching for a ring.

BOZEMAN

I'm no pedophile.

AHMAD

No. You just like photos of naked children is all.

BOZEMAN

It's called Art.

AHMAD

Of course it is.

BOZEMAN

And I didn't like them. I took them!

AHMAD

Well, that just about explains everything. It does, honest to God.

BOZEMAN

Hey, but you're a haji. You're raghead. I don't expect you to understand any of it.

AHMAD

I don't. That's true. I have no stomach for degenerates.

BOZEMAN

Other than your prophet, that is. He was a pedophile, right?

*[Fuming, AHMAD tries to decide which blade of the Swiss army knife to use on BOZEMAN. Furious, he comes up with the corkscrew.]*

AHMAD

*[Stabbing the air]*

SHUT UP!

BOZEMAN

Come on. Why are you reading the rantings of a child molester? You don't want to wind up like that, do you?

AHMAD

SHUT UP!

BOZEMAN

Do it, before it's too late. Toss your Koran. It's no flying carpet. Or it is, it takes you straight to Hell. It's faster than Concorde. You don't remember that, do you?

AHMAD

*[Holding up his Swiss army corkscrew]*

Yo, faggot!

BOZEMAN

You remember it? Well, I've flown it. No longer operates the New York—Paris route. Paradise is the place you'll reach by Concorde, Hell by Koran.

AHMAD

I'll jam it in, pull it out?

BOZEMAN

You'll be there in no time.

AHMAD

We can study your "perfect eye!"

BOZEMAN

No time at all! The parallel universe—some of you can't wait to get there.

AHMAD

We can pull it apart!

*[AHMAD is second-guessing between the blades.]*

BOZEMAN

Insatiable, is what you are. The transport will never be fast enough. "Elon Musk's got nothing on us!"

AHMAD

*[Sawing the air with the regular blade of his knife]*

Cut thin slices of it!

BOZEMAN

In the 60s, there was a performance called "Paradise Now."

AHMAD

*[Buttering an imaginary bread]*

Make a sandwich out of your eye.

BOZEMAN

Hippies, you know?

AHMAD

*[As if in a restaurant, ordering, he shows  
the victory sign.]*

An egg sandwich! Make it two.

BOZEMAN

I think, though, that their idea of Paradise—

AHMAD

*[Making signs faster than a deaf mute]*

No, make it. three. “It’s one for you and two for me —”

*[“Night Train” by Guns N’ Roses starts  
playing faintly on the background.]*

BOZEMAN

And you’re idea of Hell, where you can’t get to fast  
enough—

AHMAD

“By tonight!”

BOZEMAN

I don’t think they are one on one.

AHMAD

*[Quotes from “Night Train,” very high-  
brow]*

“I’ll be loaded like a freight train, flying like an aeroplane, feeling like a space brain one more time tonight...”

BOZEMAN

There are anomalies. But who knows?

AHMAD

“I’m on a night train!”

*[The music is getting louder.]*

BOZEMAN

One can’t be too picky about friends, in that situation of yours, the one you’re in, especially.

AHMAD

“I love that stuff!”

BOZEMAN

You’re talking about.

*[The music is getting louder still.]*

AHMAD

“I’m on a night train!”

BOZEMAN

You are?

AHMAD

“Yes, you are—you’re fucking crazy!”

BOZEMAN

You are.

AHMAD

Oops, sorry! I've got my songs mixed!

BOZEMAN

No kidding.

AHMAD

“Ready to crash and burn, I never learn!”

BOZEMAN

Tell me something I don't know.

AHMAD

“Never to retuuuuurnnn! Ho! Lee Fuck!”

BOZEMAN

Please.

*[The music gets very loud for a moment. AHMAD sings along and dances around BOZEMAN, slamming into him. BOZEMAN tries to escape AHMAD's attention with no success. Finally, the music ends and AHMAD stops.]*

AHMAD

*[Panting]*

Hey! How's that sound?

BOZEMAN

Like a presidential bowel movement. Like his speech.

AHMAD

Oh, come on!

BOZEMAN

If reality TV was a sound, that would be it.

AHMAD

Go fuck yourself.

BOZEMAN

I mean it! It was horrible! Horrible music—if you can call it that. Is that what they feed the kids these days?

AHMAD

Guns N' Fucking Roses—you haven't heard of them?

BOZEMAN

No! And I'm sorry that I did, if I just did.

AHMAD

Oh, shit. Right. You died in 1989, the year that they broke.

BOZEMAN

I'm glad they did. And I'm glad I did.

AHMAD

Jesus! You're so square!

BOZEMAN

I'm square? Look who's talking!

AHMAD

I am.

BOZEMAN

It isn't I who's wearing a fucking yarmulke on his head!

AHMAD

*[Taking his cap off, he looks at it.]*

It's not a fucking yarmulke.

*[He puts it back on.]*

It's a fucking kufi.

BOZEMAN

Oh, I see.

AHMAD

Is there any bread?

BOZEMAN

Can't see the fucking difference, is all. That's all. (It's not a yarmulke, he says. It's a fucking kufi! Oh, I see. Well, of course. It all figures... not!)

AHMAD

Yo, any bread?

BOZEMAN

You mean money?

AHMAD

No, I mean bread!

BOZEMAN

What?

AHMAD

Is there any bread?

BOZEMAN

Stupid bitch, you're dead!

AHMAD

I know. I'm not hungry.

BOZEMAN

Then what on earth are you talking about?

AHMAD

I need bread!

BOZEMAN

What for?!

AHMAD

To make a sandwich!

BOZEMAN

You're insane.

AHMAD

No, I'm an entrepreneur. I'm a start a franchise. I'll make egg sandwiches for the Vegans! And I won't be harming any animals while doing it! Your eyes will free the whole chicken folk from slavery! They will blaze the trail to liberty for our feathered friends, your eyes will. They'll be hailed as heroes! That doesn't mean that you are one, though. Your eyes will disown you. They want nothing to do with you from now on. But the chickens, they gonna be so happy! Stupid things will fly to their freedom, singing Abba all the way!

BOZEMAN

Abba I know.

AHMAD

So that is why. That's why I need bread.

[BOZEMAN *does not understand.*]

BOZEMAN

Let the record show that what he's really looking for is a bottle of Night Train. He even did a little karaoke number on it, a moment ago. Night Train is a cheap, strong wine, favored by the homeless due to its very favorable waste-for-dollar ratio. And you can put that away. You don't need a corkscrew to open it. They don't drink it in the Upper West Side.

[AHMAD *looks at the corkscrew. He hides it behind his back.* BOZEMAN *turns to the AUDIENCE.*]

In all honesty, though, one has to say: Abu never was no refugee.

AHMAD

Damn right I wasn't!

BOZEMAN

He never made it to the West.

AHMAD

I didn't even try!

BOZEMAN

He didn't, he didn't. Because—

AHMAD

I didn't want to! Didn't want to come, that's why. The land of the infidel holds no sway over me! The Middle East, the only place to be!

BOZEMAN

Abu was a terrorist. Nowadays, they call him the arch-terrorist. He started it all, the latest wave of it, at the very least. The Neo Jihad, if you will, Jihad Noir.

AHMAD

[*To the AUDIENCE, proud*]

My given name was Ahmad al Khalayleh.

BOZEMAN

Some say it sounds like a drunken slob. But what's in a name? Toss it. Pick one more to your liking. And he did. And he did.

*[AHMAD starts walking back and forth. He holds his head high, his shoulders back. Hands on his hips, he is swinging as he walks. BOZEMAN acts as the narrator in a beauty pageant.]*

He's known all over the world. His horrendous deeds precede him. The sheikh of slaughterers, they call him. Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to rock? Are you ready to feel sick to the stomach, slightly nauseous at least? The proud father of Musab hails from Zarqa—

*[AHMAD halts, suddenly. Hissing, he puts a finger to his lips.]*

—a garbage heap in Jordan. What's the matter?

AHMAD

*[Hissing]*

You need to shut the fuck up!

BOZEMAN

Why? Did I speak too harshly of your hometown?

AHMAD

No! Well, yeah, but—

BOZEMAN

How about “industrial wasteland”: would that do?

AHMAD

No! You’re giving me up!

BOZEMAN

Never rub a terrorist the wrong way. If there’s one thing you’re going to take home this eve, please. It’s a grave mistake—

AHMAD

*[Stabbing the air between them]*

I will fuck you up! I swear!

BOZEMAN

God, you’re so sensitive! Like a dried flower! There’s always somebody out to get you, out to hurt you, your feelings! And then the whole humankind has to pay for it, as a result! I’m giving you up? I am? You’re positive about this? Your identity as one of the most reviled, despised human beings of our time, next in notoriety only to the Hydra-headed al Baghdadi, it is revealed by me? Have you taken a peek in the mirror lately? You aren’t exactly in camouflage these days.

*[The most famous photo of Abu Musab al Zarqawi is projected on a wall. Then it becomes defiled.]*

AHMAD

Oh. I do have my jacket.

BOZEMAN

*[Ignoring this—with passion]*

If you had just held your horses, toned down your shit a bit, these people would have LOVED you. You were half-Palestinian, for fuck's sake! You'd won the lottery of victimhood! You could have been the Che Guevara of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – yeah, you could. And what did you do? You made bin Laden turn away in disgust!

AHMAD

The Sheikh was a pussy.

BOZEMAN

You made Osama sick to his stomach!

AHMAD

He was *way* too liberal—

BOZEMAN

Oh for the love of God!

AHMAD

*[Corkscrew pointing upwards]*

There is no God but God—

*[BOZEMAN slaps the Swiss army knife from AHMAD's hand.]*

BOZEMAN

DON'T GIVE ME THAT SHIT!

[*Indicating the AUDIENCE*]

You may fool them—

AHMAD

Who?

BOZEMAN

But you sure as hell ain't fooling me!

AHMAD

No?

BOZEMAN

I've heard your shit. I've listened to it for way too long—for all eternity, it seems—and I'm not buying it. I can see through it! You're just a lowlife punk who had to stop stealing and drinking, had to change his life, and what did you do? What did you do? Don't you think you went a bit too far? Huh?

AHMAD

[*Picks up the knife*]

Me?

BOZEMAN

Cutting someone's throat on TV!

AHMAD

Oh, everyone was okay with that!

BOZEMAN

They were?

AHMAD

Indeed. Besides, I didn't even start it, the butchery on video, butchery-on-demand, pay-per-beheading thing. It was them, Osama's people. It was KSM.

BOZEMAN

The mastermind of 9/11. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

AHMAD

That's right! It was him! And it could have been worse!

BOZEMAN

What do you mean, worse?

BOZEMAN

I could have done worse. I used a sharp knife.

*[Waving the corkscrew]*

Instead of a blunt instrument—that was civilized, don't you think?

BOZEMAN

You're a sick fuck, you know that?

AHMAD

You talkin' to me?

BOZEMAN

Yes.

AHMAD

"You talkin' to me?"

BOZEMAN

I'm talking to you. And great, you've watched *Taxi Driver*, that's my boy, very good, very cool. But you've learned nothing, absolutely nothing! What are you trying to prove?

AHMAD

You talkin' to me?

BOZEMAN

There's no one else around, you dimwit!

AHMAD

That's what I've been trying to tell you. But I'm not so sure any more.

[*Whispering*]

You don't think I saw it, but I did!

BOZEMAN

Saw what?

AHMAD

Saw you talking to someone!

BOZEMAN

Oh. That. Well. (Try and come up with something!)

[*Goes back to his catwalk persona*]

The father of Musab from Zarqa, Zarqawi, as they say in the camp was a punk and an addict—

AHMAD

Me? Never!

BOZEMAN

[*Louder*]

He was an alcoholic and a small-time thug—

AHMAD

Small? Says who?

BOZEMAN

Your friends—

AHMAD

No!

BOZEMAN

Your best buddies on the left do.

AHMAD

I have no friends, no best buddies. (Other than you, that is.)

BOZEMAN

[*Touches AHMAD's face*]

Of course you do, honey. You're such a heartthrob!

[*AHMAD doesn't know what to believe.*]

AHMAD

What's her name?

BOZEMAN

Napolitano... Something. Her Christian name eludes me now. Anyhow, she wrote an entire book about you—while you were still alive! That's what I'd call prophesy! It's how I know everything about you too, through that book

AHMAD

No one knows everything—

BOZEMAN

Try me.

AHMAD

— but God.

BOZEMAN

Try me. I've got nothing but time.

AHMAD

No God but God—

BOZEMAN

Some say it's hell.

AHMAD

Peace be upon him.

BOZEMAN

Some say it's heaven. I don't know. I just like to study. Get to know things—

*[Touching AHMAD, gently]*

Take you, for instance. Get to know—you.

AHMAD

Well. I'm not important.

BOZEMAN

Yes, you are.

AHMAD

*[Breaks away]*

I am not.

BOZEMAN

Well, scratch that.

AHMAD

Please do.

BOZEMAN

Scratch is a nickname of Satan's. Did you know that? No? And yet they say, "Know thy enemy." No enemy of mine, he isn't. Scratch was a little innocent monkey, peace be onto him. I couldn't housebreak him. So I boiled his body and made a musical instrument out of his skull—for a school project.

AHMAD

NO ANIMALS WERE HARMED DURING PRODUCTION? Wave goodbye to it, that tag.

BOZEMAN

Anyway, Abu, you were behaving very badly before you were locked up. Prostitution, extortion, dealing drugs: it sounds like organized crime to me, like mafia. Then what happened?

AHMAD

I submitted to the will of God.

BOZEMAN

And that happened in prison. Am I right?

AHMAD

Yes.

You liked it in there.

AHMAD

Nobody likes it in there. But there was some clarity on the inside. I mistook it for boredom at the time.

BOZEMAN

Tell me.

AHMAD

You can't pray and read and practice all the time. You become a dried flower if you do, your blood runs dry.

BOZEMAN

That is true.

AHMAD

You need to have some fun, too!

BOZEMAN

I agree with you.

AHMAD

We had too much time on our hands. There was nothing but time. And we had to have some laughs. So I tied the tails of two feral cats together, and threw them over a power line. And we watched them claw each other to death.

*[Smiling at the memory]*

That was fun.

BOZEMAN

I bet you liked to start fires, too.

*[Pause]*

Did you?

*[AHMAD nods.]*

Don't look at me like that. It's science. It's not black magic. This piece of information wasn't a gift from Satan! They call it "the homicidal triad."

AHMAD

Uh huh.

BOZEMAN

Sounds like a Chinese crime gang, but it isn't. It's in the genes, your upbringing. You have it, you have the homicidal triad, and your future doesn't look too bright. To put

it bluntly, your future sucks. Big time, and so does the future of everyone who's unfortunate enough to be near you. So, I'd advice to stay away from the jackpot, all three—

AHMAD

What's the last one?

BOZEMAN

I beg your pardon?

AHMAD

You said three.

BOZEMAN

Did I?

AHMAD

What's number three? The one that brings the jackpot, what is it? Tell me!

BOZEMAN

*[Snapping his fingers]*

There's a word for it. But it slips my mind. I can't remember—

AHMAD

SAY IT!

BOZEMAN

It's bed-wetting. That's number three. Bed-wetting is.

[Pause]

AHMAD

Who were you talking to before?

BOZEMAN

Why?

AHMAD

I need to know.

BOZEMAN

Um, I don't know. How to put this... sometimes? Every once in a while...

AHMAD

Go on.

BOZEMAN

[*Whispering*]

I see dead people!

AHMAD

Other than me, that is?

BOZEMAN

Yes.

AHMAD

Other than us?

BOZEMAN

Yes.

AHMAD

Who else? Who else? Who—

BOZEMAN

I can't—

AHMAD

WHO ELSE?

BOZEMAN

I'm not at liberty to say.

AHMAD

Oh yes you are. Yes, you are. You are going to tell. You are, you are. Oh yes! Why not?

BOZEMAN

It's a matter of natural security.

AHMAD

Natural?

BOZEMAN

[*Blurts out*]

Selection.

AHMAD

I see. I see.

BOZEMAN

No.

AHMAD

Yes.

BOZEMAN

No! I mean, no—

AHMAD

You said it.

BOZEMAN

Kidding, I was only kidding. No offense.

[*Pleading*]

I made a mistake!

AHMAD

Bullshit! You said, “Natural selection.” You said it, you mean it!

BOZEMAN

It was an honest-to-God, innocent mistake! I swear on my mother’s grave! And Freud can go fuck his mother! Leave me and mine alone! I didn’t mean anything by it!

AHMAD

You don’t have to mean it to do damage.

BOZEMAN

You don’t?

AHMAD

No. You, who are an expert at it, should know. You're an expert at hurting people, letting them down —

BOZEMAN

Let me, let me just check that were on the same page here. So there can be no mistakes? There are no mistakes? Fuck it, all fuel for your victimhood?

AHMAD

Well, that's funny.

BOZEMAN

What is?

AHMAD

It's funny, you being so agitated by this—a matter that has nothing to do with what we were talking about before. Some might call it a distraction. Some might call it a cover-up for your lying.

BOZEMAN

Some might suck my dick.

AHMAD

Are you sure you want to keep on throwing the weight of your alleged superiority, your white man's burden around? Under the circumstances—

BOZEMAN

What—?

AHMAD

Haven't you done enough for the day?

BOZEMAN

No! And under what "circumstances"?

AHMAD

I heard your monologue. Your Tsarnaev speech, I heard it.

BOZEMAN

A fine piece of theater, don't you think?

AHMAD

How dare you?

BOZEMAN

Me? How I dare? How dare you? How dare they come to this country and —

*[AHMAD lunges forward. He shoves his corkscrew into BOZEMAN's right eye. BOZEMAN holds a hand to the wound. Blood is pouring through his fingers.]*

AHMAD

I told you, didn't I?

BOZEMAN

I can't see!

AHMAD

Shut the fuck up! I told you! Shut the fuck up! Please!

BOZEMAN

[*Staggering*]

My left eye is just for show. It's fucking useless. The right is all I have. Had.

AHMAD

Why do you have to be so mean? All the time, huh? Treat me like a fool, treat me mean and cruel. But you don't, you don't, don't you? WHY? Since you love no one—no one but yourself! You don't know what love is!

BOZEMAN

[*Singing*]

I wanna know what love is.  
I want you to show me.

AHMAD

You're, you're Evil!

BOZEMAN

I used to be. Am not anymore.

AHMAD

[*To the AUDIENCE*]

Everybody, listen up! Robert Bozeman is not human. He may be a famous photographer, he's a notorious one for sure, all right? Some might say he's an artist, but the truth is, he's a machine, a piece of—

BOZEMAN

I used to live the high life. Sex, drugs, sex—and that's how I died.

AHMAD

He's a piece of shit!

BOZEMAN

Then I realized it was time to change.

AHMAD

He isn't a clog in the machine, he is the machine!

BOZEMAN

Time to get serious—

*[The light centers on BOZEMAN, who is approaching and addressing the AUDIENCE]*

The lives of everyone here—the infinite riches in a room—are hanging by a thread. And it's a secret. That thread is a mystery. And I'm a keep it that way.

*[Indicating AHMAD]*

You think he's out of control? Believe me, you don't want to hang around until Old Tammy pops up. Tamerlan, TT, he's like crystal meth for the Jihadi Johns. No pun intended—they go bananas over him, every time. So let's just keep a lid on it. Keep it between you and me, right? All right. All right. All right.

*[BOZEMAN collapses. AHMAD does not move.]*

AHMAD

And it was written, "He died cursing."

[*Blackout.*]

### **The Situation Room**

[*A toilet is flushed. Lights come up. Enter WESSON from the stall in the middle. She is on an IV drip, pushing the pole with the fluid bag. BOZEMAN is lying where he last fell. There is blood on the floor. AHMAD has disappeared. He is heard praying in his stall using a language of his own.*]

WESSON

There was nothing to believe in. There was no meaning to my life any more. It was, I wasn't living. It had taken over. "Existing, nothing but existing," Jimi says, and follows with a monstrous feedback, the agony of an orca. Jimi Hendrix: check him out, folks. I guess you could call what I was going through an existential crisis. You know: There is no God, there are no morals. You're free to satisfy your every whim, your every need. If you have money, that is. Broke, you're living the life of a Russian peasant before Alexander II closed the book for that travesty. You're living in slavery.